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Turkey Talk Health Discussion

If you have time – and think your family would be open to a short talk – think about having a “Turkey Talk” health discussion at your next family dinner. The “Turkey Talk” will tell your family why a family health history is important, how to collect one, and what to do with it.

Here’s how the “Turkey Talk” works. Use the “Talk to your family” boxes to guide the conversation. Feel free to use your own words so your family feels comfortable. Get everyone to join in but be mindful of family members who may not want to talk about their family health history.

1| INTRODUCE THE “TURKEY TALK”

Start by telling your family why you think knowing your family health history is important. Explain that health problems, like cancer, diabetes, and heart disease, can run in families. Having a family history of these may increase your risk of getting them too.

Talk to your family

- Why should we know our family health history?
- Because having a family history of a health problem is common – almost everyone has a family history of something.
- Because it is likely that some of us are at risk. Some of us may know it, and others may not.
- Because collecting a family health history can be fun.
- And because there’s good news – knowing your family health history could save your life. Even if a health problem runs in our family, we can make healthy choices to lower our chance of getting it.

2| TALK ABOUT RISK FACTORS

Family health history is more than just genetics. Families also share their lifestyles, habits and environment. These are called risk factors because they can affect your risk of having a health problem. Having a family history of something is also a risk factor. What do your family members know about these risk factors?

Give family members a chance to offer ideas. You’re likely to get a lot of answers. Explain that risk factors like diet, weight, exercise and smoking can affect risk. For example, if you have a family history of diabetes, are overweight, and don’t exercise, your risk is even greater than someone who doesn’t have these risk factors.



Talk to your family

■ What health problems tend to run in our family?

■ What other risk factors do we have that may increase our chance of getting these problems?



■ Smoking, eating an unhealthy diet, being overweight, and not getting enough exercise are risk factors of health problems. A family history also increases a person's chance of getting a problem.

■ But the good news is, even if we have a family history of something, we can learn from our past and protect our future. Eating a healthy diet, exercising, maintaining a healthy weight, and not smoking are ways that we can each stay healthy.

■ We can't change our genes but we can make healthy choices to lower our risk for health problems in our family.

3| TALK ABOUT HOW TO COLLECT A FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

Now that your family knows why you want to learn about your family health history, it's time to collect one. Remind your family that this will be useful for them personally as well as for younger family members.

To get started, ask your family to tell you a story about one of your family members, maybe a grandparent. Ask about where they worked and lived or what they looked like – anything to get your family talking. Then ask if this person had any health problems. Use the “10 Questions to Ask Your Family” to guide your questions.

4| TALK ABOUT WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR RISK

A family may have a high risk to develop a health problem because several of their family members had the problem at a young age. These families should talk to their doctor or a genetic counselor to learn what they can do to prevent or delay the problem. Genetic testing may be helpful in some cases. But even for families with an increased risk, steps can be taken to lower the chance of getting the health problem.

Make
Family
Health
History a
Tradition

Talk to your family

■ So, what can we do if we are worried about our family health history?

■ Talk to our doctor. Our doctor can tell us what our risk may be for a health problem, based on our family health history and other risk factors we talked about. Our doctor can also tell us about lifestyle choices and screening tests that can lower our chances of having a problem.

5| ASK FAMILY MEMBERS TO LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER

Here are two ideas to follow up with family members who may have a tendency to develop a health problem based on your family health history.

■ Give family members a call, email, letter, or visit some time over the next three months to talk to them about your family health history. A friendly reminder gives you and your family a chance to talk about your family health history and ways to stay healthy.

■ Have family members pick a "health buddy" that they feel comfortable talking to. Ask

health buddies to talk about what they have learned from their family health history. If your family didn't know a lot about your family health history, ask health buddies to find out more. Health buddies can also encourage each other to talk to their doctor about what they can do to stay healthy.

6| END THE TURKEY TALK

Thank your family for their help. Remind them again why you feel knowing your family health history is important and ask your family to keep making family health history a tradition.

Visit www.health.utah.gov/genomics or call the Health Resource Line at 1-888-222-2542 to get free copies of this toolkit for your family members.

